

## COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PLANTING MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 18, 2015

5:30-7:00pm, DPW, 147 Hampshire Street

Present:

Maggie Booz, Michel Hanlon, Kathleen Kelly, Florrie Wescoat, Nancy Phillips, Chantal Eide, Carolyn Mathews

City Arborist David Lefcourt, Community Development representative Gary Chan

Minutes taken by Nancy Phillips

The meeting was called to order by Maggie Booz at 5:35.

1. MINUTES: January minutes were approved with one proviso: that Kathleen Kelly did not personally attend the New Street meeting mentioned in Item #4.
2. ARBORIST UPDATES:
  - a. Pruning contracts -- should be out to be bid in a few weeks for parks/cemetery and for street trees. (There are still funds in the street tree contract, but work isn't feasible now, given the weather.)
  - b. Tree Planting -- David Lefcourt is in process of compiling his list of locations and species. (Nurseries say there's an availability problem due to reduced plantings during the 2008-09 recession.) David displayed the detailed matrix he uses to allocate trees to empty tree wells.
    - David mentioned that residents used to have to pay \$140/tree in order to have a street tree; this policy is no longer in effect.
    - The matrix shows that some homeowners refuse when offered a street tree on City land in front of their homes. Committee members asked about over-riding such refusals; David said the decision to end this longstanding City policy could not be his (or CPP's).
  - c. Tree Well Dimensions -- We discussed various ways of possibly enlarging (i.e. lengthening) empty tree wells -- in particular, where sidewalk pavement is relatively easy to remove, as with brick pavements. Florrie Wescoat asked about making long, continuous planting beds where feasible. Kathleen Kelly proposed 'adopting' a block and trying out the continuous planting bed model (see Action Items).
  - d. Budget-Related:
    - Interns*: This summer there will be 1 Tree Inventory intern and up to 3 water-by-bike interns (compared with only 1 last summer). Compensation is \$16.63/hour, 30hrs/week, 10 weeks. Resumes are in and will be reviewed soon. There is also a potential grant for 1 additional intern from the US Forest Service through the Society of Municipal Arborists.
    - Trees*: There are 3 sources of funds for new trees:
      - o DPW's operating budget allots \$25,000 for trees and planting. At roughly \$400/tree (including planting), this provides for about 65 new trees. CPP members expressed their concern about this small budget.
      - o The Tree Fund, consisting of funds collected from owners of major development projects in Cambridge. The main use of these funds is to replace City trees removed due to the project; funds left over after this can be used elsewhere in Cambridge.
      - o State Chapter 90 roadway improvement projects.

City Council sets a goal of at least 300 new trees/year, citywide, from all funding sources. David said that, in terms of his own ability to oversee selection and planting, 400/year would be feasible (200 per planting season). However, even the Council goal of 300 new trees throughout Cambridge may not be attainable with current funding sources, as the Tree Fund and Chapter 90 tend to concentrate new trees at major building and roadway projects rather than throughout the City. The Committee plans to communicate with City Council regarding the adequacy of the tree budget (see Action Items).

3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT UPDATES: The sad and untimely death of Brian Murphy was the only item reported.
4. MISSION STATEMENT: This was tabled in view of this meeting's weather-related low attendance.
5. UTILITY PRUNING GUIDELINES:
  - a. David has asked EverSource (formerly NStar) to provide their pruning guidelines for his and our review.
  - b. We will discuss utility pruning at CPP's March meeting, and we anticipate inviting EverSource to the April meeting.
  - c. Query: is it feasible to bury utility wires? According to David, there are too many utilities beneath the streets in Cambridge to allow for more, so that wires would have to be buried under the sidewalk; besides being very costly (an estimated \$10,000 per dwelling), this would be very damaging to street trees.
6. ANNUAL REPORT: David Davis and Michael Hanlon will prepare an Annual Report for 2014. It was suggested that Action Items in the meeting minutes could be used as the framework for this.
7. WEATHER IMPACT ON TREES: When asked about the impact of 2015's extremely cold and snowy weather, David replied that trees will indeed be stressed by the combination of salt, trunk damage from snowplows, broken branches due to snow weight. Though this is unlikely to kill trees outright, the cumulative stress will make them more vulnerable to future stress such as summer drought.
8. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING: Co-chairpersons Florrie Wescoat and Maggie Booz will be responsible for this.
9. **ACTION ITEMS:**
  - a. Spring Field Trip: The CPP will schedule a spring walkaround with David in order to better understand his decision-making regarding replacement trees and their species.
  - b. Adopt-A-Block: CPP will make a proposal to DPW that a block be selected in which the City experiments with a continuous long tree-well strip instead of multiple small wells.
  - c. Arborist Tree Budget: CPP will send a letter to the City Council urging an increase in the DPW tree-planting budget from its current \$25,000.
  - d. Utility Pruning Guidelines: We will discuss this (including the unusual guidelines proposed by writer Henry Arnold, forwarded to CPP On 1/20/15) at the March meeting.
  - e. Eversource Utility Pruning: David will invite Eversource to the April meeting.